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The Planning Services Group Records

1956-1986

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The Planning Services Group was an urban planning firm based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that assisted New England cities and towns with initiating and managing urban development projects. The firm was involved in two primary areas, urban renewal and comprehensive community planning, and many of their projects were supported from funds designated by the Federal Housing Act of 1949. The collection includes organizational histories, memoranda, correspondence, proposal guidelines, materials for citizen participation, job inventories and reports, brochures that document urban growth management and the problems of suburbanization in New England, background studies, planning reports, growth management policies, zoning bylaws

and amendments, and the files of Katharine Kulmala.

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Background on Planning Services Group

The Planning Services Group (TPSG), an urban planning firm based in Cambridge, Massachusetts from 1955 to 1975, assisted New England cities and towns with initiating and managing urban development projects. Morton Braun, who was educated in city planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and had worked at the Boston division of Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment in the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency from 1951 to 1954, founded the Planning and Renewal Association in 1955 with two partners, Robert Rowland and Donald Graham. The Planning and Renewal Association was renamed The Planning Services Group in 1961, and changed from a partnership to a corporation. The firm was most active in the 1960s, employing over fifty-nine staff-members. Braun was a lecturer in the Department of Landscape Architecture and the Regional Planning program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst from 1968 to 1976. In 1975, Braun sold the firm to Katherine Kulmala, who operated a reduced consulting service out of her home in Carlisle, Massachusetts until 1982 when she closed the firm.

TPSG had two main types of contracts--urban renewal and comprehensive community planning. Projects in the 1950s and 1960s were initiated and supported primarily with federal funds designated by the Federal Housing Act of 1949, which sought to institute a national housing policy of "a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family."

TPSG held planning contracts at the local and state level in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Maine and New York, and established long-term relationships with Durham, NH (1969-1980), Portsmouth, NH (1963-1973), Lancaster, MA (1966-1977), and Sanford, ME (1959-1973). Projects carried out at the town level included the production of: self-help planning manuals for citizens; comprehensive town plans; open space, recreation and zoning studies and revisions; plans for central business districts; plans to recycle historic buildings; and environmental and community impact studies. At the regional level, projects included planning and design criteria for new housing developments and the production of technical manuals for other planning agencies.

Scope of collection

Organizational histories, memoranda, correspondence, proposal guidelines, materials for citizen participation, job inventories and reports, and brochures that document urban growth management and the problems of suburbanization in New England, primarily in communities in eastern Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine and Connecticut, and New York (Long Island) from the mid-1950s through the mid-1980s. Reports, which comprise the bulk of the collection, include: background studies; planning reports (some in draft or with notations); comprehensive plans (for population, economic base, land use, circulation, private development, and community facilities); growth management policies; zoning bylaws and amendments; capital improvement programs; concept plans for tracts of land; revitalization plans for small town central business districts; open space and recreation plans; environmental impact statements; community impact studies; self-help planning guides; and technical guides. The collection also contains the files of Katherine Kulmala documenting work done independent of The Planning Services Group, including 1953 zoning policies for Boston; open space and recreation studies for Carlisle, Massachusetts, undertaken when Kulmala was a member of the Carlisle Planning Board; articles on lakeside development and recycling of buildings; and a manuscript (typescript) comparing contemporary urban development in the United States to 16th century development of new towns in Mexico (then New Spain).

Arrangement

This collection is organized into three series:

Series 1. Administration, 1956-1982

Series 2. TPSG Reports and Publications, 1957-1985

Series 3. Katherine Kulmala Files, 1953-1986

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1956-1982

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Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Katharine A. Kulmala via Stanley Moss, 1990.

Processing Information

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Search terms

Subjects

Arlington (Mass.)--City planning.
Boston (Mass.)--City planning.
Carlisle (Mass.)--City planning.
City planning--Maine.
City planning--Massachusetts.
City planning--New Hampshire.
Land Use, Urban--Maine.
Land Use, Urban--Massachusetts.
Land Use, Urban--New Hampshire.

Contributors

Planning Services Group **[main entry]**

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